

News Release

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Anne Heasley, Director, Pine Barrens Program
The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey
(609) 735-2200, ahasley@tnc.org

Francis Rapa, Communications Officer
New Jersey Pinelands Commission
(609) 894-7300, frapa@njpines.state.nj.us

Patricia Quinby, Communications Coordinator
NJDEP, Green Acres Program
(609) 984-0500, pquinby@dep.state.nj.us

Land Preservation Grants Awarded in Pinelands

The Nature Conservancy, Pinelands Commission and NJDEP award grants

WHITESBOG, N.J.—The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey, in conjunction with the New Jersey Pinelands Commission and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program, awarded land acquisition funds this week to four projects: 384-acre Franklin Township Piney Hollow Natural Area; 80-acre Galloway Township Heron Rookery Preservation Project; 82-acre Ocean County Forked River Mountain South and 97-acre Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge in the Rancocas Headwaters Greenway. The land acquisition funds of \$400,000 were available to nonprofit conservation organizations, county and municipal governments to acquire conservation or recreation land within the Pinelands National Reserve. An agreement between the Pinelands Commission and the Cape May County Municipal Utilities Authority established this land acquisition grant fund. A grant board consisting of a representative of all three organizations reviewed and approved the grants.

“The Conservancy is pleased to administer these land acquisition funds for the Pinelands Commission and excited to advance the protection of up to 643 acres. The grant board was thrilled that our limited resources of \$400,000 will be leveraged by as much as \$1,175,000 from

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other public and private funding sources to protect these properties in one of the State's unique landscapes," said Michael Catania, executive director, The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey.

"On behalf of the Commission, we are pleased with The Nature Conservancy's implementation of the grant program under this contract," said Annette Barbaccia, executive director of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. "The permanent protection of ecological resources in the Pinelands is a shared responsibility. This grant program provides an excellent opportunity to work with local governments and nonprofit organizations to achieve this important goal. We were pleased to award the funds to a range of partner organizations—two municipalities, one County and one nonprofit organization."

"The grant board was impressed by the response for the grant funds. We received requests for more than \$2,031,000 from eight applicants. It was a difficult decision to narrow it down to four acquisition projects, but two factors were really key—did the project leverage funds, and was there a willing seller," added Candace Ashmun, chair of the Pinelands Commission Permanent Land Protection Committee. "Importantly, the four projects selected will protect lands that support habitats suitable for a number of threatened and endangered species."

"Conservation of the Pinelands will continue to require people to come together to protect this globally significant treasure. The partner organizations funded today support the State's land preservation goals in the Pinelands," explains NJDEP Green Acres Program Administrator John S. Watson. "Partnerships are vital to the success of our land preservation program."

The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey administers the grant funds and will disperse the entire \$400,000 to qualifying nonprofit or local government organizations. The deadline for completing the acquisitions through this fund is December 31, 2005.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 14 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 83 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. Active in the Garden State since 1955, the Conservancy established the New Jersey Chapter in 1988. Within the state, the Conservancy has protected over 50,000 acres and has completed over 300 conservation transactions with the help of 33,000 individual members, as well as corporate sponsors and foundations. The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey opened a community-based program office in historic Whitesbog Village in July 2000 to safeguard the globally significant Pinelands, designated by the Conservancy as a *Last Great Place*. Visit us on the Web at nature.org/New Jersey.

The 15-member **Pinelands Commission** oversees land-use, zoning and natural resource protection in the million-acre Pinelands Area under the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan. The Plan was established following the passage of enabling federal and state legislation in the late 1970s. The mission of the New Jersey Pinelands Commission is to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the Pinelands National Reserve, and to encourage compatible economic and other human activities consistent with that purpose.

The **NJDEP Green Acres Program** was created in 1961 to meet New Jersey's growing recreational and conservation needs. To date, Green Acres has protected more than 514,000 acres of open space and developed hundreds of public parks, bringing the state-wide system of preserved open space to more than 1.2 million acres of open space and farmland. Green Acres works with landowners, local governments, and nonprofit agencies to protect land through purchase, donation, and conservation easement. The program acquires land for state parks, forests, natural areas, and wildlife management areas. Green Acres also provides low interest loans and grants to local governments and nonprofit agencies to develop outdoor recreation facilities. For more information or to preserve your land, call Green Acres at 609-984-0500 or visit the Green Acres web site at www.state.nj.us/dep/greenacres.